Experimental treatment using CRISPR to dramatically lower cholesterol under scrutiny after two patients suffer heart attacks and one dies

Researchers have been able to reduce dramatically the level of bad cholesterol in human subjects after injecting them with an experimental gene editing treatment, according to the science journal Nature, which is the first time this technique, called base editing, has been done on humans.

But at least one person died after receiving an infusion, prompting a round of safety concerns.

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Results showed promise, with test subjects seeing their LDL cut down by as much as 55 percent after 28 days. Before the experiment, they had an average LDL of 193 mg/dL, which is sky high and can be life threatening. People should have less then 100 LDL, according to medical standards.

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Participants in the trial reported a brief bout of chills, fever and headaches — as if they were going through the flu, in addition to a transient surge in liver enzyme levels.

And out of the 10 test patients, one subject died from a heart attack about five weeks after getting VERVE-101, while a second participant had a non-fatal heart attack a day after the injection. Nature did report that a safety panel of third-party experts said that the fatal heart attack was not due to VERVE-101 and they were already suffering from “advanced heart disease.”

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